IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims to read as follows:

1. (Canceled)

2. (Canceled)

3. (Canceled)

4. (Canceled)

5. (Canceled)

6. (Canceled)

7. (Canceled)

8. (Canceled)

9. (Canceled)

10. (Canceled)

11. (Currently Amended) A network lurking agent operable in a Scalable Infrastructure system, the network lurking agent comprising:

an inquirer designed to place an inquiry in a JavaSpace persistent store called a Space, the Space part of the Scalable Infrastructure system; and

a lurker designed to retrieve from the Space a response to the inquiry to determine the availability of a user in an environment.

12. (Previously Presented) A network lurking agent according to claim 11, the network lurking agent further comprising a sender designed to send a message when the response indicates the user is not in available in the environment.

13. (Previously Presented) A network lurking agent according to claim 11, the network lurking agent further comprising a receiver designed to receive a message from the Space.

14. (Currently Amended) A Scalable Infrastructure system designed to support network lurking, the Scalable Infrastructure system comprising:

a JavaSpace persistent store called a Space, the Space part of the Scalable Infrastructure system;

an environment setting stored in the Space, the environment setting including the availability of a device in an environment;

a network receiving agent designed to receive an inquiry about the availability of the device in the environment from the Space; and

a network lurking agent designed to place the inquiry in the Space.

15. (Canceled)

16. (Previously Presented) A Scalable Infrastructure system according to claim 14, wherein the Scalable Infrastructure system notifies the network receiving agent about the inquiry when the network lurking agent places the inquiry in the Space.

17. (Canceled)

18. (Previously Presented) A Scalable Infrastructure system according to claim 14, wherein the network receiving agent and the network lurking agent are designed to open devices as a result of the inquiry, the devices enabling communication.

19. (Previously Presented) A Scalable Infrastructure system according to claim 14, wherein;

the network lurking agent is designed to place a message in the Space if the inquiry is refused; and

the network receiver is designed to refuse the inquiry and to receive the message from the Space.

20. (Canceled)

21. (Canceled)

22. (Canceled)

23. (Canceled)

24. (Canceled)

25. (Canceled)

26. (Canceled)

27. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 42, the method further comprising responding to the inquiry by a network receiving agent.

28. (Original) A method according to claim 27, wherein responding to the inquiry includes accessing devices by the network lurking agent and the network receiving agent to enable communication.

29. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 27, wherein responding to the inquiry includes:

refusing the inquiry by the network receiving agent;

placing a message in the Space by the network lurking agent;

retrieving the message from the Space by the network receiving agent; and

storing the message for later access from the environment.

30. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 27, wherein responding to the inquiry includes:

placing a message in the Space by the network receiving agent;

retrieving the message from the Space by the network lurking agent; and

receiving the message at the network lurking agent.

31. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable medium containing a program to use a network lurking agent to electronically lurk to a location on a computer system, the program being executable on the computer system to implement the method of claim ~~25~~ 42.

32. (Canceled)

33. (Canceled)

34. (Canceled)

35. (Canceled)

36. (Canceled)

37. (Canceled)

38. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 44, the apparatus further comprising means for responding to the inquiry by a network receiving agent.

39. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 38, wherein the means for responding includes means for accessing devices by the network lurking agent and the network receiving agent to enable communication.

40. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 38, wherein the means for responding includes:

means for refusing the inquiry by the network receiving agent;

means for placing a message in the Space by the network lurking agent;

means for retrieving the message from the Space by the network receiving agent; and

means for storing the message for later access from the environment.

41. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 38, wherein the means for responding includes:

means for placing a message in the Space by the network receiving agent;

means for retrieving the message from the Space by the network lurking agent; and

means for receiving the message at the network lurking agent.

42. (Currently Amended) A method for using a network lurking agent to electronically lurk to an environment in a Scalable Infrastructure system, the method comprising:

identifying an environment of interest; and

placing an inquiry as to the availability of a user in the environment of interest in a JavaSpace persistent store called a Space, the Space part of the Scalable Infrastructure system.

43. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 27, wherein responding to the inquiry includes determining the availability of a user in the environment according to an environment setting in the Space.

44. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for using a network lurking agent to electronically lurk to an environment in a Scalable Infrastructure system, the apparatus comprising:

means for identifying an environment of interest; and

means for placing an inquiry as to the availability of a user in the environment of interest in a JavaSpace persistent store called a Space, the Space part of the Scalable Infrastructure system.

45. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 38, wherein the means for responding includes means for determining the availability of a user in the environment according to an environment setting in the Space.